United Nations A/65/640

General Assembly

Distr.: General
20 December 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Agenda item 68 (b)
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Note verbale dated 16 December 2010 from the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations has the honour to transmit a joint letter from the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic countries addressed to the Secretary-General (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Finland kindly requests the Secretary-General to circulate the present note verbale and its annex as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 68 (b).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 16 December 2010 from the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs would like to congratulate you on your clear commitment to combating discrimination in all its forms and manifestations.

Your principled and emphatic statement on the occasion of International Human Rights Day on 10 December underlined your personal commitment to efforts to end violence and discrimination against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. We wholeheartedly agree with you that "where there is tension between cultural attitudes and universal human rights, universal human rights must carry the day", and that "Personal disapproval, even society's disapproval, is no excuse to arrest, detain, imprison, harass or torture anyone ever".

This very issue is at stake in the resolution entitled "Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions", which is set to be adopted by the General Assembly on 20 December. As you will recall, the reference to sexual orientation as one of the discriminatory reasons making certain groups more vulnerable to unlawful killings was deleted from the resolution when it was adopted by the Third Committee.

A new reference to sexual orientation is being introduced in the text ahead of the plenary consideration of the resolution. As main sponsors of the draft resolution, the Nordic countries continue to believe that this reference reflects the real vulnerabilities lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons face worldwide.

We believe your principled support for the human rights of LGBT persons will help delegations make informed decisions on 20 December and we thank you for your continued commitment to this agenda.

(*Signed*) Lene **Espersen**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark

(*Signed*) Alexander **Stubb**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

(*Signed*) Össur **Skarphéðinsson**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland

(*Signed*) Jonas Gahr **Støre**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway

(*Signed*) Carl **Bildt**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden